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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM AMCONGEN, Lagos, Nigeria NEA 209

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

REF 1953 MAR 18 PM 47

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SUBJECT: Fortnightly Newsletter - February 23 - March

POLITICAL

Lt.-Governor East Puts Budget Into Effect

Lt.-Governor C. L. PLEASS used reserve powers at close of Eastern House of Assembly session to decree proposed budget in effect coming year. NCNC group refused allow passage budget, or any other substantive bill; thus forcing use reserve powers. So matters presently stand in East.

House of Representatives Budget Session Begins

Central House began budget session March 3. Governor's Speech From Throne excited comment because of reference to Eastern Region muddle. He termed East's crises "challenge to public faith and good government" and "setback to good government and orderly progress." Debate on vote of thanks to Gov. brought NCNC contention that East's affairs no concern any other Region. Northern leaders even more emphatic than West in stating matter is concern of everyone. AWOLowo intends propose petitioning procedure by public for dissolution Regional legislatures in future. Governor reminded House this year's budget product of Ministers, where last years drawn up without their participation as formulated prior their appointments. Other points Governor's address: setting up of Ministries as individual offices proceeding; long-awaited teachers' salary increases included in budget estimates; Public Relations Office (target of much Nigerian criticism) being studied for reorganization; and a produce tax bill will be introduced in House in current session.

Pre-session rumor expected North to demand more seats in House, but evidently will not be brought up until situation in East clears. Action Group leaders claim arrangement for voting alliance with Northern members. Would seem natural although common dislike Eastern-NCNC more probably responsible parallel voting than any agreement.

House expected

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House expected to sit almost one month. Real fireworks expected start after budget approved. Efforts of NCNC to keep East problem out of House cannot succeed. All other elements in opposition and determined bring matter to floor.

Lagos Town Council Bill Published

Gazette of Western Region published text LTC Bill to be tabled in Western House of Assembly in April. Oba of Lagos will be president of forty-two member council, chairman to be chosen from council. Small increase in LTC powers provided for.

Council of Ministers asks Canadian city government export to Nigeria for study and recommendations in re Lagos.

New Party in East

Eyo ITA, Jaja WACHUKU and other former Eastern NCNC men form National Independence Party in East. Platform of full self-government in 1956, full economic development, no tribal discrimination, and party based on national foundation. Should be recalled Wachuku formerly head small party, New Freedom Party, but abandoned it for NCNC.

Ministries in Formation

Separate Ministries under each central minister now being set up. Delayed by lack competent personnel for permanent secretaries being transferred from other areas of Commonwealth. Present Secretariat will eventually cease functioning in current form. Commerce and Industries, Mines and Power and Public Works first on list for organization.

Onitsha Town Sues Eastern Regional Production Development Board

Onitsha Native Authority suing ERPDB in Supreme Court as result its withdrawal £500,000 loan for new market. Onitsha claims Regional Executive had approved loan and Board had no legal authority rescind loan. Town sensitive on market as it is traditional trading center of region and old market recently burned.

New Smuggling Prevention Service

Anti-smuggling functions formerly under Preventative Service of Customs will be handed to new Waterguard Service (traditional British name). Preventative Service personnel not sufficiently literate or trained to carry out functions. Recruits to be trained at newly-formed Waterguard Service School.

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Suspected Ritual Murder Lagos Still Not Solved

Murder of "preacher" by members Lagos fishermen's cult suspected but not proven yet. Police officer on spot at time admits being frightened into running away, thus allowing murder proceed unmolested. Body not found but presumed thrown into lagoon with weights to propitiate fishing gods.

ECONOMIC

Lagos Taxi Drivers' Strike Off

Lagos' cabs on streets again after five days of strike. Drivers gained no points and will abide by Town Council's orders in re rotative use cab stands, wearing of badges and passing literacy test.

Western House to Consider Cooperative Bank

Western House of Assembly April session to consider proposal government-sponsored and backed bank for use all types cooperatives in Region. No coop eligible for assistance unless proves worth to regional government.

Land Use Survey Approved by Central Ministers

Council of Ministers approves land use survey to assist in settlement of Fulani herdsmen. Also approve extension powers to inspect hides and skins by Nigerian Veterinary Department, experimental plants for canning of meat products. Rejected UK Commission's 1948-49 recommendations for centralized slaughterhouses and freezing plants and for air shipment frozen meats from North to Lagos.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Zik Shifts Editors Again

AZIKIWE continues to shift editors on West African Pilot. In latest change Day Editor Laban NAMME of Cameroons has been released, replaced by OFFONRY, former editor Eastern Nigerian Guardian of Port Harcourt.

Release of NAMME, leader in Cameroons Youth Movements, may have serious effect upon Azikiwe's uncertain support in trust territory. Offonry returned recently from Moral Rearmament meetings in Europe.

Service, Tribune

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Service, Tribune Employ British

Action Group leaders in control of Daily Service of Lagos and the Nigerian Tribune of Ibadan have brought in two British specialists to revamp format and mechanical plants of both dailies. Results are already visible in layout and typographical changes.

Action Group hopes challenge Azikiwe's leadership in Nigerian press world. Meanwhile, Zik has brought out English rotary engineer to set up new press for West African Pilot.

Erwin P. Keeler

Erwin P. Keeler
American Consul General

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